

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

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statement on Hurricane Katrina**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 79/NO. 32 SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

## Steelworkers rally against boss takeaway demands

Negotiations continue as contracts expire



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Steelworkers and supporters rally in Pittsburgh Sept. 1 as contracts at U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal expired. Protesters marched to U.S. Steel and ATI bosses' headquarters.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

BURNS HARBOR, Ind. — Thousands of Steelworkers who work at mills owned by ArcelorMittal, U.S. Steel and Allegheny Technologies Inc. rallied and marched here, in Pittsburgh and in other cities Sept. 1. They are fighting against major concessions the bosses are demanding in their contracts.

With the contracts with Arcelor-

Mittal and U.S. Steel due to expire at the end of that day, USW officials announced they reached a "continue to work agreement" with ArcelorMittal and offered to keep working under the existing contract terms while talks continue at U.S. Steel as well. About 30,000 workers are involved.

Meanwhile, 2,200 members of the USW who work at ATI remain locked

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## Commemoration of Emmett Till boosts fight against cop brutality



Inset: AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast

Chicago funeral for Emmett Till, lynched in 1955 by white supremacists in Mississippi. Inset, Kadiatou Diallo, left, whose son Amadou was killed by New York cops in 1999, and Geneva Reed-Veal, mother of Sandra Bland, who died in police custody in Texas, at Till 60th anniversary commemoration in Chicago.

BY IRENE GREENE

CHICAGO — "Mamie Till Mobley started a worldwide war when she stood up and said, 'The world must know what happened to my son.' We heard about it in Africa," Kadiatou Diallo told hundreds at a dinner here Aug. 28 commemorating the 60th anniversary of the lynching of Em-

mett Till. Her son Amadou Diallo, a 22-year-old immigrant from Guinea, was killed in 1999 in a hail of police bullets as he stood, unarmed, on his doorstep in Bronx, New York. "Little did I know that I would be here today fighting in that war."

A weekend of events hosted by the

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## Socialist Workers Party kicks off 'Militant' drive and nat'l fund

BY NAOMI CRAINE

When members of the Socialist Workers Party from the Midwest joined with co-workers and others to participate in the Sept. 1 Steelworkers rally in Burns Harbor, Indiana, protesting the steel bosses' takeaway demands, they found real interest in the *Militant*, the party's paper. Participants bought 37 subscriptions, dozens of single copies and seven books on revolutionary working-class politics. This response bodes well for the subscription drive, which begins Sept. 5.

Members of the party across the U.S. and of the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom will be leading the effort to sign up at least 2,300 new and renewing readers.

The *Militant* presents the positions of the SWP and helps organize its political activity. Party members and others use it year-round to strengthen the immediate struggles of working people, such as labor fights and protests against police brutality, and to discuss working-class politics more broadly — from understanding the roots of the growing world capitalist economic crisis, to campaigning against imperialism and its wars, to

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## 'Workers need their own party, a labor party, based on the unions'

Below is a Labor Day statement by John Staggs, Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Council at-large in Philadelphia. Staggs and Osborne Hart, SWP candidate for mayor, work at Walmart and are part of the fight for \$15 an hour, full-time work and a union.

### SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

No matter where you work today, workers are up against conditions that are getting worse. In response, more and more are saying, "No!" to deepening assaults from the employers and their mouthpieces in the government. Labor resistance and working-class social struggles are on the rise today.

My party, the Socialist Workers Party, urges workers to participate in these battles. Join in solidarity with Steelworkers and Autoworkers, whose contracts run out Sept. 1 and 14, in face of boss demands for deep concessions; with farmworkers in Washington state fighting for higher

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## Turkey signs on to U.S. air war in Syria, gets green light to hit Kurds

BY EMMA JOHNSON

An Aug. 23 formal agreement between the Turkish and U.S. governments marks Ankara's decision to grant Washington access to the Incirlik air base and officially join Washington's bombing "coalition" attacks against Islamic State in Syria. In

exchange, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan got Washington's backing to unleash a war on the Kurdish population in Turkey under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

Erdogan's goal is to create the political preconditions to thwart Kurdish aspirations for an independent Kurdistan, expand the executive powers of the presidency and strengthen the

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## 'Divided loyalties' charges in rulers' Iran debate danger to working class

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The debate in Congress over the proposed nuclear accord between Washington and the government of Iran is reaching new heights of coarseness on both sides. In a particularly dangerous development for working people, the Barack Obama administration and its liberal supporters have leveled anti-Semitic charges of "dual loyalty" at New York Sen. Chuck Schumer and other Jewish op-

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Wash. farmworkers expand fight for \$15/hour, union

Australia wharfies keep up fight against layoffs, union busting



# NY bill: Public hearings, not grand juries in killings by cops

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A bill being prepared for introduction in the New York state legislature in January would require judges to hear evidence in public court hearings when cops kill civilians, banning the use of grand juries in such cases. This would be an advance for working people.

The bill is one result of the pressure from ongoing protests in New York and elsewhere by fighters against cop brutality. In many cases local grand juries, which meet in secret, have refused to indict cops who killed unarmed people, disproportionately young African-American men, as happened in the death of Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, last year.

The New York bill is being sponsored by Democratic Assemblyman Charles Barron. It's modeled after similar legislation signed Aug. 11 by California Gov. Jerry Brown.

Millions saw the video on YouTube of Daniel Pantaleo putting a fatal chokehold on Garner. "The whole world saw it except this grand jury," Barron said at an Aug. 17 news conference at City Hall.

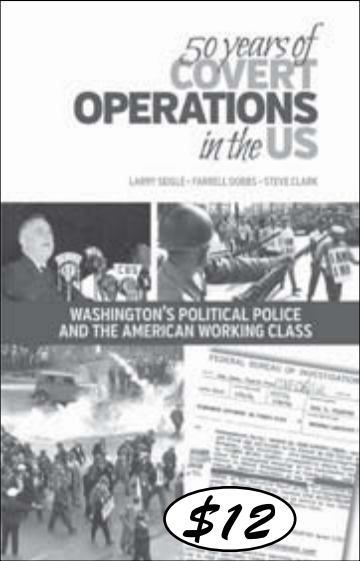
"I think the whole country needs to follow suit," Gwen Carr, Garner's mother, said at the press conference.

At least 179 people were killed by on-duty New York Police Department officers over the past 15 years. But under the whitewash grand jury system, widely hated by working people, only three of these deaths led to an indictment, a Dec. 2014 study by the *New York Daily News* reported. Only one officer who killed someone while on duty has been convicted, and he wasn't sentenced to jail time.

The *Daily News* also reported that more than 27 percent of those killed by cops over these years were unarmed and 86 percent were Black or Latino.

Federal investigations of killings by cops for possible civil rights violations haven't fared much better. It's been two decades since the federal government last prosecuted such a case against a cop in New York, Norman Siegel, former director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, told the *Daily News*.

Public protests against killings by cops have increased pressure on prosecutors to bring charges. Manslaughter charges were filed against Vincent Liang, the cop who killed Akai Gurley in an apartment stairwell in Brooklyn, New York, Nov. 20. Officer Michael Slager, who shot Walter Scott in the back in North Charleston, South Carolina, April 4, was indicted for murder. Six



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## L.A. rally: 'Jail the cops who killed Ezell Ford'



Militant/Deborah Liatos

LOS ANGELES — "I'd like to see them fired, I'd like to see District Attorney Jackie Lacey file some criminal charges," Tritobia Ford told KJLH radio's "Black Los Angeles" Aug. 11, referring to L.A. cops Sharlton Wampler and Antonio Villegas, who shot and killed her son Ezell one year earlier. "If Ezell or I or you were to go and shoot somebody, self-defense or whatever, they would file charges and they would let the courts handle it."

Ford, along with Black Lives Matter Los Angeles and Long Beach and Service Employees International Union Local 99, organized protests to mark the occasion. Ezell Ford, a 25-year-old African-American who suffered from mental difficulties, was accosted by Wampler as he walked near his South Los Angeles home. The incident escalated and cops claim Ford went after Wampler.

After a 10-month review, the Police Commission ruled Wampler had no reason to stop Ford and his handling of the encounter was so flawed that he was responsible for the fatal confrontation. Nonetheless, they ruled that Ford's aggressive behavior made the shooting "within policy," reported the Los Angeles Times.

"This is not just a matter of two killer cops but a matter of the entire system," Melina Abdullah, a leader of Black Lives Matter in Los Angeles, told an evening rally of 100 people in front of police headquarters.

The district attorney's office told the Times the case is still under review.

— DEBORAH LIATOS

Baltimore cops who were involved in the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore in April face serious charges, including manslaughter and assault. And University of Cincinnati cop Ray Tensing was charged with murder and manslaughter for the July 19 shooting of Samuel DuBose.

The grand jury setup is by far not the only part of the so-called criminal justice system stacked against workers. While more than 90 percent of felony cases are settled through plea bargaining, in those that do go to a jury trial, prosecutors have significantly reduced the number of African-Americans avail-

able from the jury pool through use of the "peremptory challenge," some studies show. Peremptory challenges give lawyers the ability to dismiss a prospective juror without cause.

A study from the group Reprieve Australia took a look at the number of Black jurors in 332 trials that occurred in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, from 2003 to 2012. "State prosecutors struck Black jurors from jury service at three times the rate they struck jurors who were not Black, reducing the percentage of Black jurors from 35 to 25 percent," their study found. The adult population of Caddo Parrish is 44.2 percent Black.

## THE MILITANT

### Back fights against union busting!

*From Steelworkers standing up to the ATI bosses' lockout to miners resisting Patriot Coal's attempt to use bankruptcy court to tear up their contract, the 'Militant' tells the truth about workers' fights against union busting and builds support for labor struggles.*



Militant/Linda Joyce

Miners rally Aug. 17 in Scott Depot, W.Va., protesting Patriot Coal attacks on union.

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# SWP kicks off drives

**Continued from front page**  
pointing to the example of the Cuban Revolution in the world today.

The drive is a focused eight-week effort, with stepped-up campaigning in working-class neighborhoods as well as among those joining labor resistance, social protests and political meetings.

Simultaneous with the subscription campaign, the SWP is organizing a fund to raise \$100,000 to help cover the party's expenses guiding its work and participating in workers' struggles, social protests and trips to collaborate with co-thinkers abroad. The Socialist Workers Party has assigned John Studer to organize the annual fund drive.

Studer is a member of the party's National Committee, with experience in steel, rail and packinghouse unions. He currently serves as the editor of the *Militant*.

The party seeks to draw all those who work with SWP members in the fight against police brutality, in union struggles, defense of abortion rights and other battles, and who join in expanding the readership of the *Militant*, into contributing and helping to broaden the party's financial base.

### 'I like the name of the paper'

"When they distributed this at the plant gate 30 years ago, I'd say, 'Go to hell,'" said Joe Piru, a retiree from Local 1010, who worked for 42 years

at the ArcelorMittal mill in East Chicago. "That's before I understood the union. The union taught me to look out for everyone." Piru signed up at the Steelworkers rally and bought a copy of *Coal Miners on Strike*. "I like the name of the paper," he said.

Tom Herendeen also decided to subscribe. He's the president of USW Local 903 at Dana Corp. in Fort Wayne, Indiana, which makes axles. "In 2006 the company filed for bankruptcy and demanded concessions," he told party member Alyson Kennedy. "The union agreed to a second tier to bridge the companies' gap when the economy declined. Now they have record sales, profits and CEO salaries."

United Auto Workers members at Ford's assembly plant in Chicago are taking a strike authorization vote this week, Kennedy told him. "The UAW is fighting to get rid of the second wage tier, while the auto companies want to add a third lower tier."

"Sounds like we'll get together again to join pickets there," Herendeen said.

SWP members from Chicago plan to visit Moline, Illinois, during the first week of the drive. The farm equipment manufacturer John Deere has three plants in the area, and the UAW contract expires at the end of September. "We'll go door to door where UAW members live, and perhaps sell at the plant shift changes," Kennedy reported.

On Sept. 7, they plan to join in Labor Day activities in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Lowell, Indiana, a small town south of Gary where Steelworkers Local 1010 will have a contingent.

Glenroy Alexander, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 888, has been reading the *Militant* since he met SWP members at New York's annual West Indian Day

## Communist League candidate backs Quebec taxi drivers



Militant photos by John Steele

MONTREAL — Beverly Bernardo, inset, Communist League candidate for Parliament in the Papineau riding here, campaigned at an Aug. 25 rally of hundreds of taxi drivers defending their jobs and livelihood in face of government-sanctioned competition from the online

ride-sharing service UberX. UberX bosses secured exemption from laws, fees and regulations taxi drivers are saddled with. Similar actions drawing some 3,500 taxi drivers took place across Quebec.

Bernardo, a worker at Walmart, received a warm reception as she handed out the Communist League's platform calling for workers across Canada to form a labor party based on the trade unions.

"We need a union, but under the law we can't have one," said Joseph, a 35-year veteran taxi driver. Under Quebec law, taxi drivers are deemed self-employed and barred from forming a union. In the two previous weeks Bernardo's supporters collected 174 signatures in working-class neighborhoods — well over the number needed — putting her on the ballot.

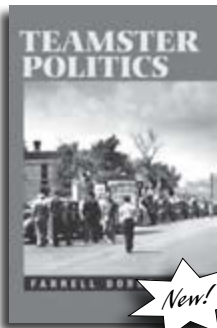
Joseph Young is the Communist League candidate for Parliament in Calgary Skyview riding in Alberta.

— JOHN STEELE

### SWP Party Building Fund

To help, contact a party branch near you (see directory on p. 8) or send your contribution to Socialist Workers Party National Office, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

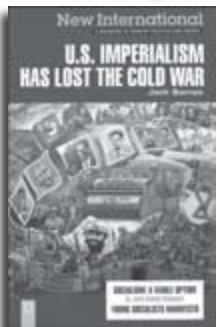
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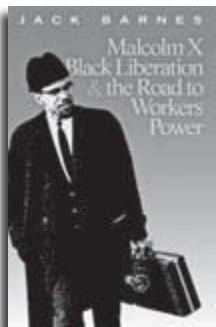
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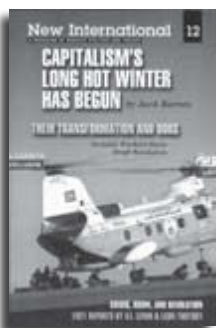
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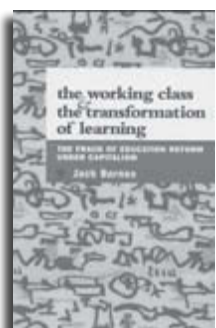
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## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

#### Los Angeles

As the World Capitalist Crisis Deepens: Why the Cuban Revolution Is an Example of the Road Forward Today. Speaker: Betsy Stone, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

#### Oakland

Open the Borders to Immigrants from Africa, the Mideast. Speaker: Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

Why the Catholic Church Hierarchy's Shift to Reverse Its Declining Influence Is an Opening for the Working Class in a World Wracked by Crisis. Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 2018 S. Ashland Ave. Tel.: (312) 455-0111.

### MINNESOTA

#### Minneapolis

Growing Labor Resistance to Capitalist Offensive. Speaker: Frank Forrester, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 416 Hennepin Ave., Suite 214. Tel.: (612) 729-1205.

### NEBRASKA

#### Omaha

Immigrants Seek Entry into Europe, Driven by Wars, Social Crisis. Open the Border to All Immigrants! Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 3302 Q St. Tel.: (402) 779-7697.

### WASHINGTON

#### Seattle

Why the Stock Plunge Is Rooted in the Worldwide Crisis of Capitalism. Speaker: John Naubert, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 5418 Rainer Ave. S. Tel.: (206) 323-1755.

### CANADA

#### Montreal

Locomotive Engineer Tom Harding and Train Controller Richard Labrie Face Life in Prison. Drop the Charges Against the Two United Steelworkers Union Rail Workers Framed Up for the Lac-Mégantic Disaster! Speaker: Philippe Tessier, Communist League. Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

'I Will Do It Again If I Have To': Video of Interview with Gerardo Hernández of the Cuban Five. Fri., Sept. 11, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 188a Onehunga Mall. Tel.: (09) 636-3231.

## —CALENDAR—

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

Rally for Abortion Rights and Reproductive Justice — Defend Planned Parenthood Funding! Sat., Sept. 19, 12:30 p.m. Federal Building, 219 S. Dearborn St. Sponsored by Feminist Uprising to Resist Inequality and Exploitation. Email: furie.chicago@gmail.com.

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Contact a distributor listed on page 8.



# Railroad Workers United calls Chicago rail safety conference

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Railroad Workers United will sponsor a one-day conference titled “Railroad Safety: Workers, Community and the Environment” Sept. 19 in Chicago. The RWU is organizing the event with labor and environmental groups, including United Steelworkers Local 1527, Frack Free Illinois and the Southeast Environmental Task Force. It is a follow-up to earlier conferences in Richmond, California, and Olympia, Washington.

“The 2013 Lac-Mégantic disaster put a spotlight on how rail bosses put profits ahead of safety and made these conferences necessary and possible,” Mark Burrows, a steering committee member of Railroad Workers United and delegate in SMART TD Local 1433 union, told the *Militant* in a phone interview Sept. 1.

On July 6, 2013, an unmanned run-away 72-car Montreal, Main and Atlantic train carrying volatile crude oil derailed and exploded in downtown Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, killing 47 people, destroying the downtown area and dumping millions of gallons of oil into the soil and lake there. The catastrophe commanded worldwide attention and spurred concern about the dangers posed by the massive increase of North American oil production and its transport by train through the centers of cities and towns across the continent.

## Government, bosses blame workers

Less widely known is the effort by the Canadian government and rail capitalists to pin the blame for the disaster on two rail workers.

On March 12, 2014, locomotive engineer Tom Harding and train controller Richard Labrie, both members of the United Steelworkers union, along with Jean Demaitre, MMA manager of train operations, were arrested by Quebec provincial police — Harding by a SWAT team at gunpoint. They were charged with 47 counts of criminal negligence causing death and face up to life imprisonment if convicted.

“RWU supports the Tom Harding defense against the serious and ominous charges against him,” Burrows said. “This case will have a place in the conference. Not only rail workers, but any worker in an industry with the potential for a serious accident with devastating consequences should be alarmed by the implications.”

Burrows blames the MMA and the Canadian government, which granted a special exemption to the now-defunct company to operate with a one-person “crew,” for the disaster.

The MMA train was parked on a slope pointing downhill toward the town, as per company practice. After a fire broke out on a locomotive, local firefighters shut down the lead engine, inadvertently releasing the train’s air brakes. The hand brakes Harding had set then failed and the train rolled into town, derailing and exploding and turning downtown Lac-Mégantic into an inferno.

When the company manager called Harding at his motel to let him know the locomotive had caught fire, he said he asked if he should return to the train. He was told to go back to sleep. After the explosion he went to the scene and risked his life helping firefighters uncouple cars that had not yet

ignited, preventing them from exploding. Many workers in the town regard him as a hero.

A Sept. 8 court hearing in Lac-Mégantic will set the date for the trials. Defenders of the framed-up workers will attend, and invite others to do so.

“The tragedy of Lac-Mégantic vividly illustrates the stakes involved for all of us,” Burrows said. “The way the bosses have pushed the union and safety protections back is responsible for overworked, fatigued, understaffed train crews operating ridiculously long and heavy trains with deadly commodities. It’s a life-and-death issue for us as workers as well as for the surrounding communities.”

There have been at least 10 more derailments of oil trains, most leading to fires or explosions, since the Lac-Mégantic disaster.

Workshops at the conference will address single-employee train crews and the hazards they pose for workers,

## Frame-up of Phila. Ironworker poses what road for labor

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER

PHILADELPHIA — Joseph Dougherty, the 73-year-old business manager of Ironworkers Local 401, was sentenced to 19 years and two months in federal prison July 20. He fought the charges, saying he was not guilty, but was convicted of racketeering, conspiracy, arson and extortion. Before the trial 11 other Ironworkers officials and members agreed to plead guilty to similar charges.

The prosecutor maintained Dougherty created a regime of “corrupt union practices and bullying tactics” intended to force nonunion contractors to hire union members. Dougherty’s attorney, Mark Cedrone, said he would appeal

## COMMENTARY

both the conviction and the sentence.

John Staggs, Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Council at-large, protested the conviction and draconian sentence — a virtual death sentence if carried to term — and joined rank-and-file Ironworkers picketing outside the hearing.

The government’s case was based on notorious RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) conspiracy laws, originally adopted in the name of combating the mafia, but widely used against unions.

The guilty verdict “is a monumental decision,” the *Philadelphia Business Journal* said. “Both locally and nationally, the decision could be the first in similar criminal cases federal prosecutors bring against labor unions and begin a wave of civil litigation against them as well.”

This government’s campaign has nothing to do with concern about corruption or thuggery in the unions. The employers are comfortable dealing with corrupt officials, since corruption is intrinsic to the nature of capitalism. And they have no qualms about violence, having spent decades unleashing goons, cops and government troops against strikers and protesters — and against toilers from Vietnam to the Dominican Republic. Their goal is to undermine



Sept. 19 rail safety conference in Chicago will discuss defense of Thomas Harding and Richard Labrie, rail workers and members of Steelworkers union framed up for oil train explosion that killed 47 in 2013 in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, above, a disaster caused by capitalist profit drive.

community and the environment; crew fatigue, “task overload” and the need for well-rested train crews; and efforts by citizens and environmental groups in the Chicago area to confront the dangers posed by trains moving through their communities.

“All over Chicago long oil trains run through every day,” Burrows said. “Some groups are mapping out the

routes and the surrounding areas that would be affected if a train derailed or exploded to let people know that, even if they’re a few blocks away from the tracks, they’re still in danger.”

The conference begins at 8 a.m. Sept. 19 at the United Electrical union hall, 37 S. Ashland Ave. For more information or to register, visit [www.railroadconference.org](http://www.railroadconference.org).

and weaken the construction trades unions and the entire labor movement.

The deepening of the capitalist economic crisis in 2008 hit construction in the Philadelphia area hard. Membership in the 23 larger unions that constitute the Building and Construction Trades Council fell 11 percent. The bosses were determined that as the industry began to grow again, it would do so with a higher percentage of nonunion labor.

Now construction projects are booming. But instead of charting a course to organize the growing number of unorganized construction workers in Philadelphia and the region, the response of the union officials has been to seek closer relations with the bosses and deepen their reliance on the Democratic Party.

The carpenters, electricians and other unions take money from workers’ dues each month for a special fund to give to contractors who hire union labor.

Other construction unions have agreed to two-tier wages in the suburbs, where union construction is less prevalent.

Ryan Boyers, business manager of the 6,300-member Laborers District Council of Metropolitan Philadelphia, which is one of a number of construction unions voting on a new two-tier contract, said the renewed emphasis on joint labor-management “marketing” could reassure potential customers put off by news of criminal convictions of the union ironworkers.

“We absolutely envision going out on sales calls with the contractors,” he said.

## Officials more like ‘business people’

So union officials talk and act more and more like “business people” and less and less like unionists.

In the Philadelphia area, union officials have tied the unions more closely to the Democratic Party. U.S. Rep. Bob Brady, a member of the Carpenters union, is chairperson of the Democratic Party. In New Jersey, Democrat Steve Sweeney, a vice president of the Ironworkers union, is president of the New Jersey Senate. He was installed by the Ironworkers International to run Ironworkers Local 401 after the local’s lead-

ers were charged.

This means the workers have no independent voice from the very government parties that now crow about the possibilities of further use of the RICO laws against the unions.

When class collaborationist methods don’t seem to be working, some officials respond with threats, intimidation and violent methods against nonunion contractors and each other in order to try to hold onto their dwindling dues base.

One small group in the Ironworkers called itself “The Helpful Union Guys” — T.H.U.G.S. for short. Some Ironworkers officials instigated a 2013 melee with members of the Carpenters union over jurisdiction.

Such methods hand the bosses and their government a weapon to use against our unions on a silver platter. As the legal assault on the Ironworkers played out, the so-called “friends” in the Democratic Party were nowhere to be seen. Many officials from other unions refused to offer support against the government indictments.

Government prosecutors, the FBI and other cop agencies had a field day, placing wiretaps on union officials and the union hall, under the guise of protecting the public from violence.

Workers need a different course — to build the unions, strengthen union democracy, organize the unorganized and champion the struggles of immigrant workers, who are a sizable proportion of nonunion construction workers super-exploited by the bosses.

This course, along with solidarity with other battles — from the demand by fast-food and Walmart workers for \$15 an hour and a union to the Black Lives Matter fight against police brutality — can increase the confidence and striking power of the union movement and win broad support.

On this basis the unions can take the lead in breaking with capitalist politics and parties and form a labor party based on the unions. As workers are transformed in struggle, gaining class consciousness and self-confidence, the road is open to fight to take governmental power away from the capitalists.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

## Help the *Militant* cover rail, steel, auto and Verizon contract fights!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about labor resistance unfolding today, to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. National rail, steel and auto contracts are approaching expiration and the East Coast Verizon agreement has expired. I invite workers involved in fights against concessions to contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

### L.A. rally backs hotel workers' unionizing drive

LOS ANGELES — More than 200 people joined a picket line and rally at the downtown DoubleTree Hotel here Aug. 20 organized by UNITE HERE Local 11 to support workers fighting for a union and better pay and conditions.

"There are too many checkout rooms," Patricia Martinez, a DoubleTree housekeeper for 22 years, said in an article on the Los Angeles Federation of Labor's website L.A. Labor on the Move. "There is not enough time for me to find the linen, wait for the elevator — that's where my breaks go."

Several UNITE HERE members from area hotels and other workplaces joined the rally.

"I'm here to support them and stop the physical and psychological abuses," Juana Melara, who has worked for 20 years at Westin hotels, told the *Militant*. "We're fighting for a union and contract there like here."

Maria Villalobos, a janitor for 43 years at the University of Southern California cafeteria and a member of Local 11, attended the action along with several co-workers.

"We have to vote yes," Martínez told the rally. "Now is the time for us to be unified so we can have benefits, so we can have our breaks."

—Deborah Liatos

### Union call responders stand up to B.C. Auto Association lockout

BURNABY, British Columbia — The British Columbia Automobile Association June 5 locked out some 70 members of Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union Local 378. The call-takers and dispatchers work round the clock taking auto club members' emergency assistance requests from British Columbia and the Yukon.

Bargaining stalled "over pay equity, justice," Malcolm Colcleugh, picket coordinator, told the *Militant* in front of the dispatch center here Aug. 22, as passing drivers honked in support.

"BCAA's new nonunion company, Evo car sharing, has people doing the same job as we do, paid the same but working 20 fewer hours a month," Colcleugh said. COPE members work 40-hour weeks, while workers at Evo work 35. "They're out to break the union."

Garry Payne, shop steward with almost 40 years' service, described petty company harassment. He was on holiday when the lockout began and the employer denied him vacation pay.

When the lockout started the bosses physically took the headphones off call-takers and escorted them out.

BCAA roadside assistance vehicles regularly cross the line. "Some drivers are supportive. They talk to us and wave," said Susan Wills, a call-taker and job steward. A large sign next to the picket line reads, "Drivers should be treated fairly too. Union cards available here."

Management personnel and five drivers on their days off are staffing the phones and dispatching, workers said.

More than a dozen members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union walked the line July 31, Wills said, and on other days the firemen's band and a union choir performed.

—Katy LeRougetel and Lynda Little

### Australia wharfies keep up fight against layoffs, union busting

SYDNEY — Dockworkers here and in Brisbane, members of the Maritime Union of Australia, continue their fight against Hutchison Ports Australia's union-busting layoffs. The company sacked 97 out of 224 employees Aug. 6 by midnight message.

Hutchison workers described the sackings as "head-picking" that violated union seniority. "It should be last on, first off," Holly Matthewson, 26, who worked for two years at Hutchison, told



Militant/Deborah Liatos

Hotel workers rally Aug. 20 at DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. They are fighting for representation by UNITE HERE Local 11 and better wages and working conditions.

the *Militant*.

For a week after the sackings, work came to a standstill at the two sites as dozens and at times hundreds of unionists swelled the picket lines, turning away trucks.

Hutchison-bound ships were diverted to other port operators under subcontracting arrangements the company had made in anticipation of the dispute.

An industrial court Aug. 13 ordered temporary reinstatement of the sacked workers, pending court-sponsored talks between the parties. When the wharfies attempted to return to work the following day, however, the sacked workers were denied entry.

Unionists and supporters continue to assemble at the gates as the dispute enters a new phase.

As global trade has contracted over the past five years, Hong Kong-based multinational Hutchison Port Holdings in its two new ports here has been competing for market share.

"It's not a rerun of '98. Half the workforce is in and half is out," Paul Wallington, a sacked Hutchison wharfie who worked at rival port operator Patrick for 18 years, told the *Militant*. He was referring to the mass pickets that defeated a government-backed union-busting lockout at Patrick 17 years ago.

—Ron Poulsen

## Wash. farmworkers expand fight for \$15/hr, union

BY MARY MARTIN

MT. VERNON, Wash. — Some three dozen farmworkers walked off the Valley Pride Farms blackberry fields here Aug. 8 demanding higher pay and drinking water and toilet facilities in the fields. The workers have joined Familias Unidas por la Justicia, the independent farmworkers union established in 2013 at nearby Sakuma Brothers Farms, Angel Reyes, 28, a leader of the fight, told the *Militant*.

Valley Pride owner Larry Jensen told the *Skagit Valley Herald* Aug. 11 that he has no intention of raising wages and denied that toilets and drinking water were not available.

"We know how much we can pick," Reyes said. "We know \$4.25 a box was

not fair," especially with the recent dry weather that damages berries and makes them harder to pick.

The workers asked for \$4.75 a box, but Valley Pride bosses refused and fired four people, denying them paychecks until they signed a paper stipulating the day they would move out of company housing.

The workers called Familias Unidas por la Justicia for help. President Ramón Torres came with two others and stayed for three days, going to the company to demand the workers be paid immediately. "We told them what they were doing was illegal," Torres told the *Militant*. The company relented and brought the checks to the camp. "The bosses treat you differently when you have a union,"

Torres said.

The workers at Valley Pride live in California, but travel each year to work harvests here. They're indigenous people originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, whose first language is Mixteco.

"I didn't know about unions before I came here," Reyes said.

The fired workers have not been reinstated and there has been no wage increase, Reyes said, but more drinking water is available and toilet facilities in the field are improved.

"We ask workers who read the *Militant* to support us," Reyes said. "The rich owners have money, vacations anytime, travel wherever they want. Where did the money come from? From our

Continued on page 7

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 14, 1990

Hundreds of thousands of union members and other working people in cities across the United States and Canada took advantage of Labor Day activities during the first weekend in September to show support for their unions. At the events many participants bought copies of the *Militant*, which featured news on the Eastern Airlines strike and the U.S. aggression in the Arab East.

At the head of several marches and present at rallies and picket lines were members of the Machinists union on strike against Eastern. Other workers on strike or battling for a contract were also present at Labor Day events — from garment workers and coal miners to bus drivers and newspaper printers.



September 13, 1965

The Mississippi Freedom Labor Union (MFLU) was formed in Shaw, Miss. in early April, among Negro farm workers. Within two weeks of its founding, 1,000 Negro workers had signed up, and more than 200 agricultural day laborers went on strike to win a union contract. The union spread to at least six other counties in the state, and is still waging a bitter strike struggle against the corporation farms.

The strike has been affected by the seasonal character of farm work. There is a busy season of cotton chopping (weeding) during the spring and early summer, but then a lull in work until the harvest, which begins at the end of August and extends into the fall.



September 14, 1940

With a deal negotiated behind closed doors and sprung suddenly on both Congress and the American people, the U.S. government has taken a long plunge forward toward its new place in a warring world.

The deal, blandly made public by President Roosevelt on September 3 involved the swap of 50 U.S. overage destroyers for bases in the Bahamas, in the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad, and Antigua, and in British Guiana on the northern coast of South America. In addition Britain gave outright to the U.S. the right to bases in Newfoundland and Bermuda. The obvious one-sidedness of this exchange serves only to stress the relative positions now occupied by the British and U.S. empires in the world picture.



# Socialist Workers Party 2005 statement on Hurricane Katrina

## Gulf social disaster: ‘Twin capitalist parties at fault, workers need a labor party’

Ten years ago on Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina swept over the coastal areas of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama with catastrophic consequences. More than 1,800 people were killed, 1 million displaced and 80 percent of New Orleans was submerged in a swamp of dirty water. In a Sept. 7 statement that year published in a special issue of the *Militant*, reprinted below, the Socialist Workers Party said that the “political servants of the employing class demonstrated contempt for working people and callous disregard for their conditions and very survival.”

“There has been a specific process of recovery that is perhaps unique in my lifetime right here in the state of Louisiana, right here in New Orleans,” said President Barack Obama at an Aug. 27 meeting of several hundred people at a community center in the Lower Ninth Ward, a heavily Black, working-class area that was devastated by flooding 10 years ago.

“We should have made so much more progress,” Lower Ninth Ward resident Charles Brown told Reuters Aug. 6. “I don’t see anything to celebrate.” Brown was an emergency responder after Katrina, searching for those missing. In the Lower Ninth the population is half the size it was a decade ago. Windows remain boarded up, roofs are caved in and lots are overgrown.

New Orleans population of 385,000 today is 20 percent lower than pre-Katrina. The African-American population has fallen by 100,000. In 2013, the median income for African-American households was \$25,102 compared to \$60,553 for Caucasian households. That divide has grown by 37 percent in the last 10 years.

Also reprinted below is a *Militant* excerpt reporting Washington’s refusal of much-needed medical aid offered by the revolutionary government of Cuba.



The social catastrophe in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is an indictment of the capitalist two-party system in the United States through which a handful of billionaire families maintains its political power and its wealth.

The deadly lack of preparedness for the crisis unfolding across the Gulf Coast and the brutal and belated government response provide further evidence of whose class interests are represented by politicians at the federal, state, and local level. Without exception — whether the Republican White House and bipartisan Congress, Louisiana’s Democratic party governor and New Orleans mayor, or other Democratic and Republican officials in that state, Mississippi, Alabama, and beyond — these political servants of the employing class demonstrated contempt for working people and callous disregard for their conditions and very survival.

While the rich and the middle-class professionals, including many direly needed doctors, got out of New Orleans, along with anyone else able to leave on their own, tens of thousands of workers and their families were left behind, the large majority of them Black. No effort was made by government at any level to press into service every plane, bus, train, and automobile at hand to get those least

able to evacuate out of harm’s way. As a result thousands of working people were killed by the indifference of those whose wealth is based on exploiting our labor.

Many other workers in New Orleans (and across the Gulf Coast) were left to fend for themselves without medical attention, food, or water. Cops and government troops were deployed in working-class neighborhoods with orders to stop people from obtaining needed supplies to stem mounting starvation, dehydration and spreading disease. Tens of thousands, suddenly homeless and having lost their personal possessions, were herded — still with nothing to eat, still with nothing to drink, and still with no medical care — into unequipped and soon squalid facilities such as the Superdome and convention center.

The rapid explosion of this social calamity brought to the fore once again the factionalism already marking U.S. bourgeois politics, as capitalism enters the opening stages of accelerated worldwide economic and financial crises, social breakdowns, and spreading wars. As the deaths and devastation came into sharper relief for the world to see, the demagoguery of Democratic and Republican politicians became increasingly shrill. They ratcheted up what they themselves dub the “blame game,” with demands that “heads roll” and sanctimonious calls for “impartial” investigations. In doing so, what the employing class presents as politics appears more and more baldly as an expression of the dog-eat-dog values, “look out for number one” individualism, and pressures undermining human solidarity central to the very ways capitalism works — from the job market and factory floor, to every aspect of social life.

Confronting the horrors of recent days, working people have done what they can to cope with these emergency conditions and take care of each other. As the bosses’ parties and their government have shown themselves unwilling and incapable of meeting even the most elementary necessities to survive, however, the need for the working class to have our own independent organizations — organizations that can speak and act in the interests of the vast majority — has been driven home.

That begins with organizing, using, and extending the trade unions, the elementary defense institutions of the working class. Working people need our own political party, based on a fight-



AP Photo/Eric Gay

Inset, Militant/John Benson

“Cops and government troops were deployed in working-class neighborhoods with orders to stop people from obtaining needed supplies to stem mounting starvation, dehydration and spreading disease,” SWP said ten years ago. Above, displaced workers yell at SWAT team patrolling New Orleans, Sept. 1, 2005. Inset, Sam Manuel, left, interviews workers for the *Militant* at emergency shelter in Biloxi, Mississippi, Aug. 31, 2005.



ing union movement. We need a labor party that organizes, acts, and speaks on behalf of workers and the oppressed, independently of the twin parties of the employing class. A party that represents the interests of an *international class* that has no borders.

Along this road, the working class and unions right now need to demand that Washington and state and local governments deliver massive aid for food, shelter, clothing, and medicine to stricken areas along the Gulf Coast and everywhere workers and their families have been evacuated.

We need to campaign for a massive, federally funded public works program at union-scale wages to rebuild homes, schools, hospitals, and other facilities and infrastructure destroyed by the hurricane and floods.

We need to press for prosecution of cops and government troops responsible for killings and for actions violating the rights of working people.

We need to call for a moratorium on farm foreclosures and massive government aid to farmers whose crops, buildings, equipment, and livelihoods have been ruined. ...

In Cuba, a country with far fewer

economic resources than the United States and where workers and farmers conquered political power nearly half a century ago, hurricanes hit ferociously and touch a much bigger percentage of the country every time they land. With a mobilized and politically conscious working class, however, the revolutionary government in Cuba has organized to confront these deadly forces of nature with minimal loss of life. Unlike in the United States, the first priority of the Cuban government is to protect the life and health of the population. ...

The most effective response by working people in the United States to the disaster across the Gulf Coast is to take the next steps along the road to building the kind of independent political movement that can free us of dependence on the bosses’ government and parties, and from handouts by their charities.

### End the Blockade Against Cuba!

**September 16-18  
Washington, D.C.**

**Program includes:**

Photo exhibit:  
The Cuban 5 Return: An Entire Country Celebrates.  
Opening event: Sept. 17, 6 p.m.  
University of D.C. Law School  
4340 Connecticut Ave., 5th Floor  
Reception Area

All-day conference:  
The US Blockade Against Cuba:  
Why It’s Wrong and  
What We Need to Do to End It.  
Participants to include Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda; Jan Susler, attorney for Oscar López; author Stephen Kimber.  
Sept. 18, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Calvary Baptist Church, 755 8th St. NW  
For more info:  
[www.theinternationalcommittee.org](http://www.theinternationalcommittee.org)

*Excerpt from the ‘Militant,’ Sept. 26, 2005*

### US gov’t snubs Cuban offer to send doctors

WASHINGTON — The White House has snubbed an offer by the Cuban government to send 1,586 doctors along with 36 tons of supplies to help provide badly need medical treatment in the Gulf region of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The U.S. government has not responded to an aid offer from the Venezuelan government. ... White House spokesman Scott McClellan responded to the [Cuban] offer at a September 8 press briefing. He stated, “When it comes to Cuba, we have one message for Fidel Castro: He needs to offer the people of Cuba their freedom.”...

“We are anxiously waiting, every moment, for a positive response,” Dr. Jesus Satorre, a 33-year-old cardiologist, told the Associated Press. Satorre is part of the team of Cuban doctors waiting in Havana to aid the hurricane victims. “It would be marvelous to be elbow-to-elbow with the American doctors, helping these people, saving lives for the love of humanity,” he said. This would not be Satorre’s first international mission. He helped an international team of doctors tackle a major cholera crisis in Guinea-Bissau in 2002.

— SAM MANUEL



# Cuban art depicts horror of Nazi extermination of Jews

Printed below is an article from the Aug. 5 Cuban daily *Granma* titled, “Against Forgetting; ‘Auschwitz Exhibit: Remembering the Horror’ Well Received in Matanzas.” It is a review of an exhibition of works by photographer and designer Ariel Balmaseda based on photos of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest complex of Nazi concentration and labor camps, located in Poland.

Between 1940 and 1945 the German Nazi regime headed by Adolf Hitler killed between 2.1 and 4 million people at Auschwitz, the vast majority Jews. Most of the victims were killed in gas chambers, but others died from starvation, forced labor, disease, firing squads and torturous medical “experiments.”

The exhibit, sponsored by the Decorarte cooperative, of which Balmaseda is president, opened July 20 with a program in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It will run through Sept. 14 in the Pedro Esquerré Provincial Gallery in Matanzas.

Since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party have spoken and acted forcefully against all forms of Jew-hatred.



## BY VENTURA DE JESUS

Matanzas — “Auschwitz Exhibit: Remembering the Horror” received a warm welcome here. This confirms that no one wants to forget or pardon Nazi barbarism, in particular its crimes against Jewish people.

The exhibit seems to have received the reception it deserved, commented specialist Damian Valdez, who emphasized the sensitivity of people who viewed it and their eagerness to broaden their knowledge of that extraordinary occurrence.

Selected by the photographer and designer Ariel Balmaseda, the exhibit has been open for several days. It will continue until September in the regional gallery Pedro Esquerré here.

Although the artist assumes at least a basic knowledge of the epoch and events of the Second World War, the historic photos he has chosen ably highlight a critical view of the concentration camps and the Jewish holocaust, one of the most atrocious crimes in modern history.

The exhibition is made up of artistic works on a grand scale, based on historic photos from that military episode.

It presents iconic images of the crimes committed by the Nazis in the concentration camps.

Experts in the field say that the forceful images illustrate the thin line that divides life from death in those so-called “ghettos” or extermination camps. At the same time, they are a denunciation of cruelty and dehumanization.

Artist Ariel Balmaseda succeeded in giving the gallery the right atmosphere to convey to visitors the horrific memory of the camp at Auschwitz, sadly famous among the centers of mass extermination created by the Nazis.

# Steelworkers rally against boss takeaway demands

**Continued from front page**  
out of their jobs at 12 plants in six states.

Smaller rallies took place Sept. 1, including in Chicago; Conshohocken, Pennsylvania; New Bedford, Massachusetts; and Waterbury, Connecticut. The USW is planning another major action Sept. 7 on the Iron Range in northern Minnesota.

Steelworkers gathered at the USW Local 6787 hall and were bused to a nearby park for a rally. Then some 2,000 marched to the ArcelorMittal offices here in the heart of the Chicago-area steel industry.

“When I started in the mill 44 ½ years ago there were accidents every day,” Charles Blankenship, 64, who worked at U.S. Steel in Gary after retiring from ArcelorMittal, told the *Militant*. “Mainly because of union involvement the safety improved. If it wasn’t for the union the mills would be a lot worse.

“I was driving a coal hauler that slid off the ramp because they didn’t have a brim. I was covered up and trapped inside,” he said. “After I was rescued the supervisor told me they wouldn’t report the accident, but I told him ‘I quit. I didn’t work at ArcelorMittal for 44 ½ years to come to U.S. Steel to get killed.’”

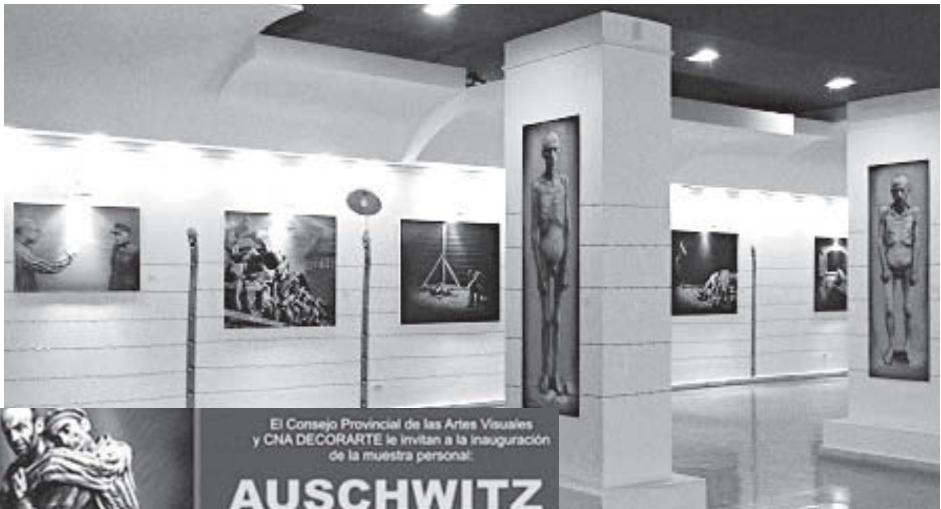
Jerome Davidson, Rapid Response coordinator for USW District 7, told the rally there were workers there from over 10 Steelworkers locals, including locals at Chicago-area mills and Local 7-1, which was on strike for three months at the BP oil refinery in Whiting.

Levi Simmons, 26, who works at U.S. Steel’s Midwest Plant near Portage, was at the rally with Jimmie Edwards, 65, who has been there for 35 years. “They are going after insurance for retirees and propose no raises,” said Simmons. “They want us to work 32 hours a week instead of 40 and don’t want to pay overtime after eight hours,” Edwards said.

U.S. Steel is demanding “dramatic increases in active and retiree health care costs as well as changes to contract language covering hours, overtime and contracting out, among other concessions,” a union press release stated.

“The most important issue is health care,” said Bruce Tull, who has worked at ArcelorMittal for 40 years and is a technician at the mill here. “We gave up wage increases in other contracts to keep these benefits. We pay no premiums and low co-pays.”

The companies are demanding \$250 premiums for families, \$150 for single



Above, La Jiribilla

Above, “Auschwitz: Remembering the Horror” exhibition in Matanzas, Cuba, by artist Ariel Balmaseda based on photos of German concentration camp in Poland where Nazi regime killed millions of Jews. Inset, invitation to exhibit.



workers and higher co-pays. They want a two-tier setup that would mean lower pay and benefits for new hires.

“They want to take away everything. It is not fair for the new hires. All workers need a union,” said Archie Aaron Jr., a retiree from ArcelorMittal.

Marvin Britton was at the rally with his wife Kim. Both work at U.S. Steel in Gary. “This year the company started a program called the Carnegie Way that saves the company money by doing things like workers making less scrap. But the company still wants more.” Marvin Britton told the *Militant*.

“We understand the conditions with the dumping of steel, but we don’t want the companies to take advantage of us. These companies were built on the backs of the workers,” Kim Britton said. “We work around a lot of unsafe chemicals. Things like safety, health care and retirement are big concerns.”



## BY MITCHEL ROSENBERG

PITTSBURGH — Some 2,000 members of the United Steelworkers and supporters rallied here Sept. 1. The boisterous crowd marched from the USW International headquarters to both ATI and U.S. Steel corporate offices.

ATI locked out over 2,200 USW members Aug. 15, refusing to budge on many concession demands common to the three companies. On Aug. 31, the USW announced it would meet with ATI and federal mediators Sept. 11-12.

“What the company is trying to do to us is a terrible thing. But a younger generation is turning out, gaining experience and confidence,” said Local 7139-05 member Joe Korowicki, who is locked out at ATI’s Washington, Pennsylvania, works. “I love the solidarity.”

“We’re ready to strike if it doesn’t work out,” said Erv Meyer, who works at U.S. Steel in Fairless Hills.

“Since the lockout, the women have really stepped up in each local” at ATI’s Vandergrift mill, said Regina Stinson, who has spearheaded Steelworkers Spouses of ATI Flat Roll Products there. Her husband, Terry Stinson, is a locked-out member of Steelworkers Local 1138. “The most important responsibility we have and the best education we can get is on the picket line,” she said.

ATI has hired strikebreaking security thugs from Phillips Group, Inc.

“We were just talking about the history of union busting in this country,” said Local 1557 member Earl Kauff-

man, from U.S. Steel Clairton Coke Works. “The Pinkertons were formed to be strikebreakers and they were used against workers on strike at Homestead Works in Pittsburgh.”

Steelworkers from Pittsburgh and other areas were joined by contingents from the United Food and Commercial Workers, Our Walmart, Operating Engineers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, International Association of Fire Fighters and the A. Phillip Randolph Institute.

Cyndi Murray, part of the campaign for “\$15 and full-time work” at Walmart in Laurel, Maryland, came with a co-worker. Like her father and brother, Murray worked at Homestead Works before U.S. Steel closed it in the 1980s.

“At Walmart, the bosses cut the workforce and put extra work on fewer people, sometimes demanding we do the impossible,” Murray said, “If we can change Walmart, we can change the country.”

Kurt Dehnert was busy signing up Steelworkers and others to support efforts to win \$15 and a union where he works at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center hospital.

*Mitchel Rosenberg is a member of USW Local 10-1 at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery. Arlene Rubinstein contributed to this article.*

# Farmworkers

**Continued from page 5**

manual labor. We are a union and we will keep fighting.”

At Sakuma Farms 150 union berry pickers walked off the job Aug. 17-18 and pushed back the company’s demand that workers pick 22.5 lbs. of berries an hour to earn \$10 an hour. The unionists demanded a 15-lb. quota. As a result of the strike, Sakuma agreed to a 16.5-lb. quota and fired a hated supervisor. The union’s main demand is \$15 an hour and a union contract.

Workers at dairy farms in central Washington that supply the Darigold company are planning a protest at Darigold headquarters in Seattle Sept. 2 demanding safe working conditions and compensation for injured workers and family members of workers killed on the job. Farmworker Randy Vasquez drowned in a manure pond on a Darigold supplier farm in Mabton earlier this year when the front-loader truck he was driving tipped over.

## Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had a worldwide political impact, including on workers and youth in the imperialist heartland. As the proletarian-based struggle for Black rights was advancing in the U.S.,

the social transformation fought for and won by Cuban toilers set an example that socialist revolution is not only necessary — it can be made and defended. **\$10**

**Also in Spanish, French, Farsi.**

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# Why labor should oppose the imperialist war drive

Teamster Bureaucracy, *one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month in September, tells the story of how the leadership of Minneapolis Teamsters Local 544 organized to oppose Washington's entry into World War II. It recounts the infamous 1941 federal sedition trial that culminated in the imprisonment of 18 leaders of Local 544 and of the Socialist Workers Party, including the book's author, Farrell Dobbs, for carrying out this campaign. The excerpt below is from the opening chapter, "Let the People Vote on War." Copyright © 1977 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FARRELL DOBBS

General Drivers Local 544, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, set out to organize trade union opposition to Roosevelt's preparations for use of the workers as imperialist cannon fodder. Local 544, an affiliate of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, AFL, was led by Trotskyist militants. They were revolutionary socialists, whose training and experience enabled them to grasp the real meaning of the scheme being cooked up in Washington.

The leaders of Local 544 were also seasoned campaigners, well versed in the organization of mass actions. Thus it was apparent to them that the first task was to alert the union ranks

to the dangers arising from the new course taken by the White House and to explain why the workers' vital interests were threatened. Only in that way could the necessary forces be drawn together to launch a broad protest movement.

Fortunately, there was an excellent vehicle at hand to undertake that beginning. The Minneapolis Teamsters had a weekly paper, the *Northwest Organizer*. ...

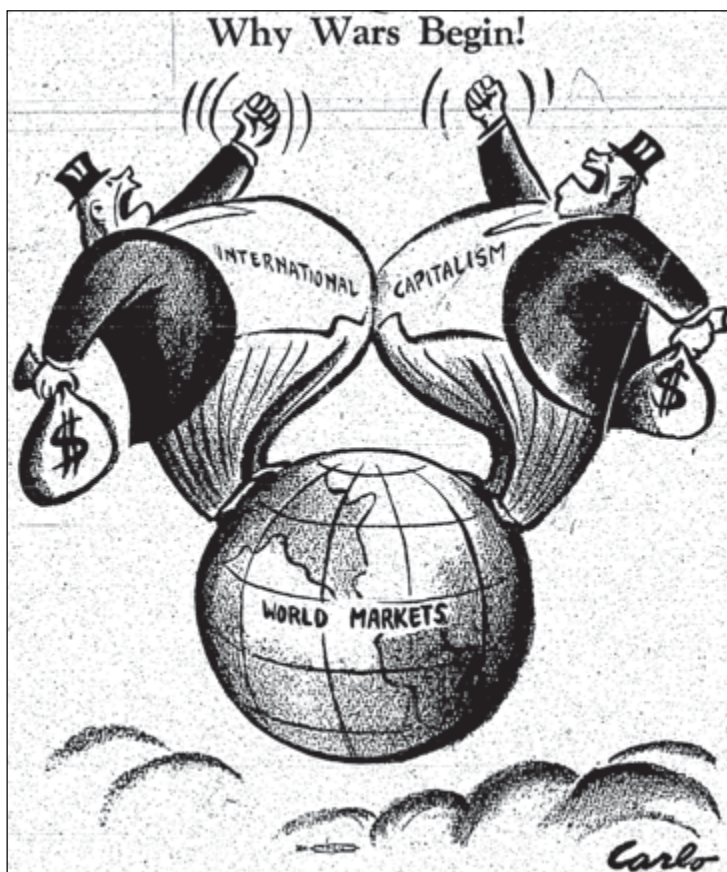
[I]n July 1937, the Japanese military invaded North China. Shortly thereafter two United States soldiers stationed in the war zone were wounded, and the capitalist propagandists seized upon the incident to build up anti-Japanese sentiment here in this country. At that point the Teamster paper set out to counter the jingoistic line, opening with an editorial which asserted:

"The reason the United States has its garrisons in China and its warships in the Far Pacific is to protect American capitalism in the Orient. The American worker has nothing whatever at stake, the American bosses have millions of dollars of investments that must be protected. The American worker has nothing to gain and everything to lose by a war fought to protect American capitalism. ... In the present crisis in the Far East, the interests of the American workers lie with the interests of the downtrodden people of China.

"For an understanding of the whole problem of Imperialism and its relation to the American trade union movement, the *Northwest Organizer* recommends to its readers a series of articles on this subject beginning in the next issue."

Five articles written by Tex Norris, a revolutionary socialist educator, were then published. His main points, which were illustrated by historical examples, may be summarized as follows:

Imperialists are capitalists with investments in foreign countries. By 1937 United States business interests were making increasingly large investments in every possible quarter of the world.



Cartoon from Teamsters weekly *Northwest Organizer* July 7, 1938.

Those who benefited from this development were trying to keep the facts hidden from the workers, who always came out losers in such a situation, and it was the duty of the labor movement to explain what was happening.

Profits made by gouging U.S. labor, Norris continued, were being used in the form of capital to exploit foreign workers at starvation wages, even lower than those paid here. In order to maximize such exploitation, the imperialists, acting just as they did at home, sought to use the governments of the particular foreign countries to break strikes by native workers and, wherever possible, to crush their trade unions. The accomplishment of those aims helped, moreover, to hold down wage rates in this country, thus enabling the imperialists to reap superprofits at the expense of both U.S. and foreign labor.

In an effort to cope with this problem, some within the trade unions were promoting "Buy American" campaigns, hoping thereby to protect jobs and wages in this country. But such notions were misleading, he pointed out. In the long run, no nation could sell more to foreign nations than it bought from them. Efforts to build walls around na-

tions were, therefore, bound to result in restricted production and a reduced standard of living. Instead of pursuing that false course, the answer to the difficulty lay in cooperation between U.S. and foreign workers in a common struggle to win better conditions for all. ...

Imperialism, he added, was a natural development in any advanced capitalist nation. Just as U.S. business operated outside its home base, so did British, French, Italian, Japanese. The competition between those different imperialist interests within a contracted world market was growing keener daily, and that was leading to the most terrible of all the consequences of imperialism — war.

Protection of U.S. business interests in that sharpening conflict, Norris emphasized,

had become the main concern of the Roosevelt administration. Its State Department had consuls searching for foreign investment opportunities. Prospective investors were being shown where diplomatic and military protection could be offered. Acquisition of military bases was going on in regions where capitalist investments abroad were concentrated, and Washington was preparing to pull millions of workers into the armed forces for war against its rivals.

If workers in the U.S. were to resist this mad course, he concluded, they needed to fight against capitalism itself, of which imperialism was a deadly offspring. That, in turn, called for the clasp of workers' hands in other countries in a grip of international labor solidarity.

While presenting the foregoing explanation of imperialism, the *Northwest Organizer* added editorially: "The army is not our army, but belongs to the rulers of America and is for THEIR use — to protect THEIR investments and interests in foreign lands, and in case of domestic crises, to protect the same interests at home against the workers."

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# —SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT— ‘For a labor party based on the unions’

## Continued from front page

wages, job protection and a union; with rail workers organizing to defend Tom Harding and Richard Labrie, the train engineer and controller facing frame-up charges by Canadian authorities seeking to scapegoat them for the 2013 derailment in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, that killed 47 people.

Join actions across the country where African-Americans and others are protesting cop killings of unarmed youth, battles demanding an end to discriminatory victimization and deportations of undocumented workers, in defense of women’s right to choose abortion, and more.

Working people need a program that starts with the needs of the toilers of the world. No to imperialist exploitation of colonial peoples and Washington’s wars for markets and resources, from Afghanistan to Iraq. Open the borders in the U.S. and Europe for those fleeing war and social upheaval from Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia.

The Socialist Workers Party fights for a massive, government-funded public works program to put people to work at union wages rebuilding critically needed infrastructure, housing, schools, hospitals and other things workers need.

We call for the formation of a labor party, based on the unions. We need our own party to mobilize our class in action today and points toward the revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorship of capital and establishment of a workers and farmers government.

Through this struggle we are transformed, gaining the capacity to take control of society and work with toilers worldwide in the construction of a socialist society built on human needs, not profits. We have the powerful example of the Cuban Revolution, where workers and farmers overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship, took power and extended internationalist aid to those in struggle from Angola to Vietnam for more than 55 years.

Join us!

## Till event boosts fight against cop brutality

### Continued from front page

family of Emmett Till and the Mamie Till Mobley Memorial Foundation brought together families of Black youth killed by police or racist thugs, including relatives of Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Kenrick Johnson, George Kemp Jr., Rekia Boyd, Andrew Johnson III, Sean Bell, Marlon Brown, Oscar Grant and Tinoris Williams. They powerfully brought home the continuity of today’s struggles to the Black-led social movement of the 1950s and ’60s that put an end to the system of racist segregation known as Jim Crow.

“We’re here to say Black Lives Matter,” said Ron Davis, whose son Jordan Davis was killed by a white racist thug in Jacksonville, Florida, three years ago.

Emmett Till, a 14-year-old from Chicago, was kidnapped and tortured to death while visiting family in Money, Mississippi, after reportedly whistling at a white woman. Till’s cousin, Rev. Wheeler Parker Jr., explained how white supremacists Roy Bryant and his brother, J.W. Milam, took Till from the house at gunpoint in the middle of the night.

The two brutally whipped Till with .45 caliber pistols, shot him in the head, tied a 75-pound fan around his neck with barbed wire and threw his mangled body into the Tallahatchie River.

Mamie Till insisted that Emmett’s casket be opened. Fifty thousand people filed through the church where her son lay; millions around the world saw the photo-

graphs. The response to the lynching helped galvanize the fights against racism that had been building since World War II into a mass social movement. It helped win a new generation of youth to the struggle, laying the groundwork for the creation of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Bryant and Milam were arrested and tried for the murder but were acquitted by an all-white jury after barely an hour’s deliberation. Months later they admitted to the murder and described it in detail in an interview with *Look* magazine. They said Till told them, “I’m not afraid of you. I’m as good as you are.”

The 60th anniversary events here included an Aug. 28 procession from the church where Till’s funeral had been held to his gravesite, and a dinner that evening built on the theme, “The Legacy Lives — Emmett Till Remembrance Dinner.” A Youth Empowerment Day of film screenings, cultural events, seminars and a Sunday gospel service rounded out the weekend.

Geneva Reed-Veal, whose daughter Sandra Bland died in police custody in rural Hempstead, Texas, after a minor traffic stop, spoke at both the cemetery and the dinner. “It’s been one month and 28 days,” she said. “I’m tired of talking. I’m tired of crying. But I’m not tired of fighting.”

“I came to support the family in getting the truth out,” Toni Taylor from St. Louis, mother of Cary Bell Jr. who was killed by police in 2013, told the *Militant*. “We need to fight together.”

## ‘Divided loyalty’ charge danger to workers

### Continued from front page

ponents of the accord.

“What should be a thoughtful debate has been turned into a vicious battle against Mr. Obama, involving not just the Republicans but Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu,” the *New York Times* editors wrote Aug. 1. Their editorial condemned the “unseemly spectacle of lawmakers siding with a foreign leader against their own commander in chief.”

For the *Times* editors, disagreeing with Obama’s Iran policies border on disloyalty.

Thinly veiled anti-Semitism is coupled with efforts to shut down discourse in the Aug. 8 edition of the Daily Kos, a liberal online blog, which ran a four-panel color cartoon in a series called “Animal Nuz,” depicting Schumer as a rodent with the Israeli flag behind him. A character calls Schumer a traitor.

In July Republican presidential contender Mike Huckabee said, “The Iran nuclear deal is marching the Israelis to the door of the oven,” referring to the Holocaust of European Jews carried out by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s and ’40s.

The campaign targeting Jews for their views cuts both ways. Some Jewish opponents of the Iran deal have launched vitriolic attacks on Jewish Democrats who support the president. Dov Hikind, New York state assemblyman from Brooklyn, parked a double-decker bus adorned with a banner with a photo of Ira-

nian Ayatollah Ali Khamenei waving and thanking the U.S. for the deal in front of the Lower Manhattan office of Jerrold Nadler, U.S. representative for New York’s 10th Congressional District on Aug. 21. On Nadler’s Facebook page, someone called him a kapo, a Jew who collaborated with the Nazis.

Reps. Nita Lowey, Eliot Engel and Steve Israel, three New York Democrats who oppose the deal and who are Jewish, issued a joint statement Aug. 25 criticizing attacks on Nadler, Schumer and themselves.

“We remain concerned that individuals on both sides of the debate have resorted to ad hominem attacks and threats against those who don’t share their opinions. This is unacceptable. ... No matter where you stand on the Iran deal, comparisons to the Holocaust, the darkest chapter in human history, questioning the credentials of long-standing advocates for Israel, and accusations of dual loyalty are inappropriate.” Lowey told the *Times*, “I’ve been accused of being treacherous, treasonous, even disloyal to the United States.”

The attempt to stifle political debate through charges of “disloyalty” or “dual loyalties” is a threat to the working class, beyond the thinly veiled anti-Semitism in many of these attacks. Such accusations have been and will be used against workers who begin to see their interests as different from the U.S. capitalist rulers and take an independent stance in opposition to imperialist wars and in solidarity with fellow toilers worldwide.

## US, Turkey agreement

### Continued from front page

domination of his Justice and Development Party in November elections. Turkey’s capitalist rulers and Washington share a common hatred for the Kurdish independence struggle.

Washington negotiated nine months to regain access to Incirlik, which was restricted since 2003. Sorties from Incirlik to Syria take 15 minutes, compared with three hours from the Arab-Persian Gulf.

Washington needs Turkey in the war against Islamic State for several reasons. Many of the oil sales that fund IS take place on Turkey’s black market, and IS combatants and weapons flow freely across the border.

U.S. forces had already begun airstrikes out of Incirlik Aug. 5. Joint flights with Ankara will start soon, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

Washington’s stated aim is to rid a 1,400-square-mile zone in northern Syria of Islamic State combatants. The Turkish government has made clear the zone must also be free of Kurdish fighters. This would prevent further advances westward by Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), who now control two-thirds of Syria’s 560-mile border with Turkey and are the most effective force on the ground fighting Islamic State. Erdogan has said his government would “never allow” a Kurdish state in the north of Syria.

In June elections the Kurdish-based People’s Democratic Party (HDP) passed the 10 percent threshold to enter Parliament, showing it had support beyond the Kurdish population. This robbed Erdogan’s party of its governing majority and set back the president’s moves to strengthen his grip on power. In response, Erdogan blocked the formation of any government coalition and pushed through a call for elections Nov. 1.

### An outright war on the Kurds

Immediately after the initial deal with Washington was announced July 23, the Turkish government unleashed an outright war on the Kurdish people, under the pretext of fighting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), branded terrorist both by Ankara and Washington. In addition to bombing areas in Iraqi Kurdistan and firing artillery on YPG forces in Syria, Erdogan set off a wave of repression against Kurds in Turkey, specifically targeting Kurdish areas in the southeast.

The Kurds, 30 million people in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, have been fighting national oppression and for a homeland for more than a century. In 1984, the PKK opened armed struggle against the Turkish government, which responded with brutal repression against the Kurdish population. Over the following decades tens of thousands were killed.

Bombings and other acts targeting civilians carried out by the Stalinist-trained leadership of the PKK have caused unnecessary casualties, weakening the Kurdish fight, and gave a series of Turkish regimes the pretext to attack the broader Kurdish population.

In 2013 Erdogan’s government and the PKK reached a cease-fire agreement and in the period since, the struggle for Kurdish autonomy and national rights around culture, language, education and freeing of political prisoners made advances.

Since Erdogan canceled the cease-fire in late July, Kurdish areas have been under daily attack. Ankara declared a state of emergency in Kurdish districts across southeast Turkey and sent in special forces, supported by the army, to target civilians, bomb workplaces and set homes on fire. Towns and provinces have been sealed off and power and water supplies cut.

“Hundreds of people from both sides have lost their lives so far,” Harun Ercan, international relations advisor with the HDP in Diyarbakir, Turkey, told the *Militant* by phone Sept. 2. “In addition to military operations, the Turkish government started to arrest both cadres and elected officials of our party two weeks ago. In reaction, people’s assemblies started to demand local autonomy. The government responded by arresting mayors — so far seven.”

Ercan said the PKK announced it will not retaliate against Turkish armed forces if they do not launch attacks on local people and PKK fighters.

“But today the prime minister sent a memo to all governors in the Kurdish region to continue the ‘war on terror’ policies in a more strict manner,” he said. “The international community should be concerned about the November elections and to what extent the Kurdish people will be able to use their democratic rights.”